

## Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation Update, March – April 2016



**Family Unification** – The Sisters of Charity are grateful that Associate Debra Gish was able to accompany Myrna across the Mexico-Texas border and through U.S. Customs to be reunited with her family. Excerpts of Debra’s letter to the Immigration Task Force give a glimpse into this act of love. “I’m ... very happy to report a successful reunion of a mother and her two young daughters!!! *(Photo on left of mother Myrna with her daughters Michele & Heidi, as she emerges from custody on the US/Mexico border. SCNY Associate Debra Gish in background.)*

As many of you know, we set out for Mexico on Wednesday with the two daughters of Myrna and Miguel. With blessings of New Sanctuary Coalition of New York, Sisters of Charity of New York, and collective prayers and solidarity of our friends and family, we were tasked with encountering Myrna, a mother of two children who are US citizens. Myrna was deported nearly 3 years ago, after sending her girls back to live with their father, Miguel, given the violent convulsive conditions Mexico is undergoing.

Our journey was made in faith given the odds against Myrna who had been denied entry by every other legal means. So we joined the Caravan (<http://peacelifejustice.org/>) from Central America who had left Tegucigalpa, Honduras at the end of March. The Caravan is making its way to the UN as a witness against the failed war on drugs, which is in reality a front to money-laundering and the militarization of our communities. These policies translate into an encroaching enforcement and punitive system that allows for thousands of innocent families to be displaced, disappeared and killed under the U.S. banner of security & democracy.

Over 200,000 parents are deported yearly from the USA, criminally separating them from their children. While it is a federal crime for a parent in the U.S. to abandon their children, immigrant children are thrust into no man's land, made orphans without identity, shelter, or basic protection when their parents are deported.

Mother Myrna, after being taken into custody and interrogated by Homeland Security for several hours, was finally granted temporary permission to rejoin her family while she awaits her hearing for political amnesty. Her plea to remain in the USA with her daughters is based on reasonable fear and threats of violence against both she and her daughters in her Mexican hometown.

I thank you for your prayers, solidarity and support on our journey. I am so blessed to be an Associate of the Sisters of Charity of New York! Thank you for entrusting me to represent you on this unprecedented humanitarian mission! I am deeply honored and humbled with this outcome! Blessed be! Debra L Gish



**April Kabagambe**, graduate intern in PJIC Office this Spring semester, participated in the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 60) hosted by the United Nations. April attended the side event, *Fighting Sexism and Hate Speech Online – a Nordic panel of experts*. The panel discussed gender equality, and the resistance and hatred that thrives in the online world. April also joined the Immigration Task

Force at their monthly meetings and volunteered with WESTHAB in the Nodine Hill section of Yonkers. April says “I was fortunate to be an intern in the PJIC Office with the Immigration Task Force over the Spring semester. I felt that my time spent on the Task Force and with Sisters was very eye opening. I was able to gain knowledge in the ways of working in the Peace and Justice area.”

**LeeAnn Braithwaite**, Associate and graduate intern in PJIC Office, on left in picture, was able to attend two CSW 60 side events. One event, at Fordham Law School, focused on “*Sustainability through Overcoming Violence: Restoring the Earth; Respecting Women.*” LeeAnn was in a group with the Sr. Theresa Kotturan, the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Representative (not in picture), a Sister of Charity of Nazareth from India (middle), and Denise Scotto, a lawyer and U.N. advisor (on right).



***An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence*** was affirmed by the participants of the Nonviolence and Just Peace gathering held in Rome, 11-13 April 2016. The gathering was co-convened by Pax Christi International, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, UISG/USG and many other international Catholic organizations. It reads in part, “As Christians committed to a more just and peaceful world we are called to take a clear stand for creative and active nonviolence and against all forms of violence. We need a new framework that is consistent with Gospel nonviolence. A different path is clearly unfolding in recent Catholic social teaching. In every age, the Holy Spirit graces the Church with the wisdom to respond to the challenges of its time. In response to what is a global epidemic of violence, which Pope Francis has labeled a ‘world war in installments’, we are being called to invoke, pray over, teach and take decisive action. With our communities and organizations, we look forward to continue collaborating with the Holy See and the global Church to advance Gospel nonviolence.” *This statement brought back memories of Sr. Agnes Connolly’s call to peacemaking and the SCNY 1994 Corporate Stance regarding Nuclear Disarmament. It raised the question for me, how might I/we re-commit to the centrality of gospel nonviolence? Carol De Angelo, SCNY PJIC Director*